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AUTHOR	Clotfelter, Charles T.
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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the role of private schools in an assessment of segregation in K-12 schools, with special reference to the south. It presents evidence to support two main conclusions. First, private schools have grown in importance in the south since 1960, in contrast to their declining importance in the rest of the country. This contrary trend can be attributed to the region's small proportion of Catholics, to its rising affluence, and to school desegregation. Because of the typically large areas covered by school districts in the south, private schools have offered white families an especially effective means of avoiding exposure to nonwhites in schools, particularly in counties with very high minority concentrations. In those counties, the rate at which whites enrolled in private schools tended to rise with the percentage of all students who were nonwhite, increasing sharply in counties over 60 percent nonwhite. Second, the paper measures the extent to which private schools contribute to segregation in schools in all regions. Using data on public and private enrollments in 1999-2000, the paper shows that private schools accounted for only about 17 percent of such segregation for the nation, with the bulk of segregation attributed to racial disparities between public and private school districts. For the nation, segregation increased between 1995-1996 and 1999-2000, and a rise in white private enrollments had a role in the increase. (Contains 12 references.) (Author/SM)

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Private Schools, Segregation, and the Southern States*

Charles T. Clotfelter

Abstract

This paper considers the role of private schools in an assessment of segregation in K-12 schools, with special reference to the South. It presents evidence to support two main conclusions. First, private schools have grown in importance in the South since 1960, in contrast to their declining importance in the rest of the country. This contrary trend can be attributed to the region's small proportion of Catholics, to its rising affluence, and to school desegregation. Because of the typically large areas covered by school districts in the South, private schools have offered white families an especially effective means of avoiding exposure to nonwhites in schools, particularly in counties with very high minority concentrations. In those counties the rate at which whites enrolled in private schools tended to rise with the percentage of all students who were nonwhite, increasing sharply in counties over 60% nonwhite. Second, the paper measures the extent to which private schools contribute to segregation in schools in all regions. Using data on public and private enrollments in 1999/2000, the paper shows that private schools accounted for only about 17% of such segregation for the nation, with the bulk of segregation attributed to racial disparities between public school districts. For the nation, segregation increased between 1995/96 and 1999/2000, and a rise in white private enrollments had a role in this increase.

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Charles T. Clotfelter
Box 90245 Duke University
Durham, NC 27708-0245
Phone: 919-613-7361
Fax: 919-681-8288
charles.clotfelter@duke.edu

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Private Schools, Segregation, and the Southern States[*]

Charles T. Clotfelter

More than three decades have now passed since the momentous Supreme Court decisions in *Green v. County School board of New Kent County* (1968) and *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* (1969), which finally brought to an end the regime of segregated schools in the South. As Orfield (1983) has shown, the effect of enforcement efforts following those decisions transformed the public schools in the South from the least to the most integrated in any region in the country. In the wake of those decisions, hundreds of private schools sprang up, but they appeared at the time to be rash and uncertain responses.

Now is a propitious time to reexamine the role that private schools are playing with respect to school desegregation and segregation.[1] Especially in light of the growth in incomes and urbanization in the South over this period, it is pertinent to ask whether patterns of private school enrollment in the South have become more similar to those historically observed in the Northeast and Midwest. Among the reasons why it is important to learn about patterns of private enrollment is that they almost certainly affect the overall segregation of schools. By providing places of enrollment that are quite obviously separate from those provided by the public schools,

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[1] In this paper, "segregation" is used primarily in the sense that social scientists have come to use it, as the extent to which students of different racial groups attend separate schools, rather than as the name of the policy used to keep races separated. See Massey and Denton (1988) for an assessment of various measures of segregation. In the present paper, race is understood to include ethnicity, so that nonwhites include Hispanic or Latino students.

private schools contribute to the overall segregation of students, where segregation is taken to mean the uneven distribution of students of different racial groups across schools. Were private schools not to exist, in other words, students might experience higher levels of interracial contact than they do in fact. In addition, the rising affluence of the South, combined with the unusually rapid rise in incomes of households in the upper half of the income distribution occurring nationwide, make private schools a particularly important topic to investigate, since those rising incomes make private schools financially feasible for more families.

This paper has two main aims: to examine the trend in private school enrollment in the South since the advent of school desegregation and to highlight the contribution of private schools to overall segregation, both in the South and elsewhere. By way of preview, the paper establishes two findings. First, private schools in the South have grown in importance, in contrast to their gradual decline in the rest of the country. School desegregation appears to be one major reason for this growth. Second, private schools contribute to racial segregation in the schools of all regions, though they are usually less important than racial disparities that exist between and within public school districts.

The paper is organized as follows. Section I reviews some previous research on private schools in the South, focusing in particular on patterns of private school enrollment in Mississippi, and reviews broad trends in private school enrollment by region. It shows that private school enrollment has steadily grown in importance since the advent of desegregation, at the same time that private schools have become less prominent elsewhere. Section II describes the data used in the present study. Section III presents measures of the contribution of private schools to segregation in the South, as compared to other regions. It shows that private schools

account for a portion of overall segregation, but much less than is attributed to racial disparities between and within public school districts. The contribution of private schools to segregation is greatest in non-metropolitan areas in the South. Section IV thus focuses on non-metropolitan areas and the existence of tipping points in patterns of private school enrollment. Section V documents recent trends in private school enrollment and segregation. There is a brief concluding section.

I. Desegregation and the Growth of Private Schools in the South

Private schooling has a long and honored role in American education. Not only did private schools predate public ones, they have retained a small but significant share of elementary and secondary school enrollment. Historically, private schools have claimed a larger share of enrollments in the Northeast and Midwest than in the relatively impoverished South and the newer West. Yet, in the wake of desegregation orders following the *Brown* decision, households in numerous Southern communities turned to private schools as never before. Virginia's "massive resistance" to desegregation in the 1950s featured the closing of schools in several districts. In Prince Edward County, private schools for whites were organized, obtaining financial support from public funds as well as nonprofit organizations (Patterson 2000, p. 99). Again in the late 1960s, all-white "segregation academies" sprang up in Mississippi's cotton belt, following the Supreme Court's decisions in *Green* and *Alexander*, cases that effectively eliminated dual school systems.

To be sure, these episodes of white resistance were extraordinary, even for the region or the period. Yet it may fairly be said that private schools flourished throughout the South during

the period of desegregation. Over the period 1960 to 1999, while the share of all students attending private schools in the U.S. dropped by three percentage points, the share in the South *increased* by three percentage points. As shown in Table 1, the South in 1960 had by far the lowest share of students in private schools of any region in the country. Owing in part to its relatively small proportion of Catholics, whose parochial schools made up a large share of private schools in the country, the South had only 5% of its elementary and secondary students in private schools, less than a quarter the comparable share in the Northeast. Over the decade of the 1960s, when most of the desegregation of the Southern public schools took place, the private enrollment rate in that region increased slightly, but did so while rates declined in every other region of the country. Indeed, the South's private enrollment share has risen steadily until, by 1999, it was only about two percentage points below the national average.

In some parts of the South, private enrollments spiked markedly in the wake of thoroughgoing school desegregation orders, as in the case of Mississippi noted above. That state's private enrollment tripled between 1967 and 1972, as shown in Table 2, raising the private share from 3.5 to 10.6% of all students. Nor was this merely a temporary blip. By 1980, most of this increase had been solidified into a significantly higher share of students in private schools, a share that continued into 1997.

One noteworthy aspect of private enrollment in Mississippi was the phenomenon of massive exodus of white students out of the public schools in some districts. As detailed in Clotfelter (1976), the rate of exit from the public schools in 1968 and 1969 was especially high in districts where the school-age population was majority black. Indeed, the evidence from that period is consistent with the existence of a tipping point just over 50% in the proportion of a

county's school population that was black.

Yet, as Table 1 makes clear, the expansion of private schools was by no means confined to Mississippi. Private enrollment in North Carolina, for example, increased by a third between 1970 and 1971 in the wake of desegregation orders. And in the metropolitan area of Memphis, private enrollment increased from 13,000 to 33,000 between 1970 and 1973, following a court order involving busing for desegregation (Clotfelter 1976, p. 29). The question for today is whether these early jumps in enrollment have been sustained in the form of continuing higher levels, with their consequent effect on racial segregation in schools.

II. Data and Measures

The present study makes use of detailed enrollment data available for public and private schools for the 1999/2000 year. Information on public schools comes from the Common Core of Data, which is based on data reported by state departments of education.[2] Data on private schools are taken from the National Center for Education Statistics' Private School Universe Study, a periodic survey most recently undertaken for the 1999/2000 year.[3] To assess recent trends in enrollments and other measures, comparable data from both sources were collected for the 1995/96 school year as well. Because the focus of this paper is on private enrollments and segregation in the regions of the country whose schools were segregated by law before 1954,

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[2] Data for two states, Idaho and Tennessee, were not included in the 1999/2000 Common Core. Thus public school enrollment data for the 1998/99 year were used for Tennessee, and data for 2000/01 were used for Idaho.

[3] Private school enrollment data exclude special education schools, include kindergartens in schools whose highest grade was kindergarten, and were weighted to reflect non-responses using the weight variable SFNLWT.

most of the tables in the paper present comparisons at the regional level.[4] School districts are grouped by metropolitan area, using the same 1990 definitions for both years of data.[5] Because patterns are likely to differ between large and small metropolitan areas, calculations based on metropolitan areas with total school enrollments over 200,000 are shown separately from smaller areas. Non-metropolitan counties are analyzed separately and for tabular purposes summarized by region.

Table 3 summarizes the data on enrollments from the combined sources for the 1999/2000 year. Among the five regions, private enrollment was most common in the Northeast and Midwest and lowest in the South and West, patterns roughly consistent with the rates presented in Table 1.[6] The largest metropolitan areas in each region showed the highest rates of private enrollment, followed by the smaller metropolitan areas, with the lowest rates in counties

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[4] Regions are as defined by Orfield and Monfort (1992), as follows: *South*: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia; *Border*: Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, West Virginia; *Northeast*: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont; *Midwest*: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin; *West*: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

[5] Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) were used. Those that had components in more than one region were assigned to the region containing the larger enrollment.

[6] By way of comparison, Department of Education (2001, Tables 40, 59) gives estimates that total 51,269,000 for total Fall 1999 K-12 enrollment, 10.1% of which was in private schools. The totals implied in Table 3 understate the published numbers for public enrollment by 2.1% and private enrollment by 0.1%. Using comparable data for public and private schools for 1997/98, Reardon and Yun (2000, Table 1, p. 16) understate private enrollment by 4.1% compared to the published figures for that year. They calculate the private enrollment share for the nation as 9.7%, somewhat smaller than the 10.0% share implied by the published figures.

outside of metropolitan areas. The percentage of students attending private schools was over twice that of non-metropolitan areas in every region. A principal advantage of the private school universe is its detailed enrollment information by race. Among the calculations these data allow is the percentage of whites who attend private school, which is shown by region in the last column of Table 3. A striking aspect of this column is the similarity across regions it reveals. Except for the Midwest, whose rate of private school enrollment for whites was over 18%, whites in the rest of the country enrolled at rates very close to 13%. In fact, the rate for whites in the South was at least comparable to those in all regions except the Midwest.

III. Measuring Segregation and the Role Played by Private Schools

The basic measure of segregation used in this paper begins with the exposure rate, which measures the racial composition of the school attended by the average student of a given group. For example, the exposure rate of white to nonwhite students in a metropolitan area, interpreted as the percentage nonwhite in the average white student's school, is

$$E = [\ W_j\ \ \%N_j\ ] /\ \ W_j,$$

where W_j is the number of whites and $\%N_j$ is the nonwhite percentage in school j. To the extent that schools in the metropolitan area differ in their racial compositions, this exposure rate will fall below its maximum possible value, the percentage of all students in the metropolitan area who are nonwhite. The gap between the actual exposure and this maximum is a measure of unevenness, or segregation, and when expressed as a percentage yields a widely-used index of segregation:

$$S = (\%NW - E) / \%NW,$$

where %NW is the percentage nonwhite of all students in the metropolitan area. The index's minimum value S=0 indicates racially-balanced schools (no segregation), while its maximum S=1 indicates that whites and nonwhites attend entirely separate schools.[7]

In Clotfelter (1999), I show how this measure can be decomposed to distinguish segregation in public schools attributable to racial disparities between school districts from those within school districts.[8] In the current paper, I extend that logic to include segregation arising from the existence of private schools. To see how this can be done, consider how the actual exposure rate calculated for a metropolitan area would compare to the exposure rates (shown in parentheses) that would apply to four hypothetical scenarios, each one less segregated than the last: a) each district racially balances its schools (E^*); b) all public schools in the metropolitan area are balanced at the same racial composition (E^{**}); c) in addition, all private schools are racially balanced within the private sector (E^{***}); and, d) all schools, public and private, are racially balanced at the same racial composition, which is the racial composition of all students in the area (%N).

Since E E^* E^{**} E^{***} %N, the total segregation index can be partitioned to yield four components, representing the portion due to racial disparities in the composition of schools:

1. within public school districts $(E^* - E)/ \%N$
2. between public school districts $(E^{**} - E^*)/ \%N$

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[7] Reardon and Yun (2002) refer to this measure as the "normalized exposure index."

[8] Although it is grammatically incorrect for cases involving more than two districts, I retain the term between in referring to differences among public school districts because the within-between dichotomy is familiar terminology to decompositions in statistics and economics. In referring to differences among private schools, however, I use the term "among" because there is no similar dichotomy for private schools and because the number in any area is almost always greater than two.

3. among private schools (E*** - E**)/ %N
4. between public and private schools (%N - E***)/ %N

Using data on the racial composition of individual public and private schools, the various exposure rates necessary to perform this decomposition were calculated for 335 metropolitan areas.[9] The decomposition can easily be illustrated using the case of Atlanta. In 1999/2000, the exposure rate of whites to nonwhites in all schools in the Atlanta metropolitan area was 23.2%, whereas the percent nonwhite in the school population was 44.8%, yielding a relatively high segregation index[10] of .483. If, however, every school district had balanced its schools so that all the schools in a district had the same racial composition, the exposure rate would have been higher, 30.0%, and so on with each of the hypothetical policies listed above. Calculations of E* (30.0%), E** (42.7%), and E*** (44.0%) can be used to partition the total segregation index of .483 into a portion due to imbalance within districts (.152), that due to disparities between districts (.285), that due to racial disparities among private schools (.030), and that due to the overall racial disparity between public and private schools (.017). The details of these calculations are spelled out in the Appendix. Typical of the large metropolitan areas I examined in Clotfelter (1999), the largest part of Atlanta's segregation in 1999/2000 can be attributed to the differences in racial composition between public school districts – in Atlanta's case, between the largely black Atlanta and DeKalb County districts and a host of predominantly white districts

[9] All Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs), for those metropolitan areas that are part of Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas, using 1990 definitions of components, were included. Excluded were metropolitan areas in Idaho, for which no data were available in the CCD, as well as Alaska and Hawaii.

[10] The index of .483 was calculated as S = (44.8-23.2)/44.8, where the result may not be exact due to rounding.

– while the contributions of the other three factors are each much smaller in magnitude.

Similar calculations were made for non-metropolitan counties as well, where measured segregation is based on gaps within each county rather than within each metropolitan area. The calculations for non-metropolitan counties were then aggregated to the state level by taking averages weighted by enrollment.[11] Because the notion of segregation itself is rooted in the existence of racial disparities among individual schools, the diversity, and therefore usually the size, of the geographical unit of observation will influence the degree of measured segregation. Thus large, diverse metropolitan areas will tend to have more segregation than smaller, more homogeneous ones. By the same token, less segregation is apt to be measured in individual counties than in metropolitan areas, which are usually composed of more than one county. But counties are the best and most natural unit for assessing segregation outside metropolitan areas; the next logical unit, the state, is clearly too large, since racial balance at the state level is an unrealistic and rather unappealing standard of comparison.[12] Because counties thus tend to cover smaller and less diverse geographical areas than metropolitan areas, one expects that between-district disparities will be less important in the non-metropolitan counties.

To give a sense of the levels and decomposition of segregation, Table 4 presents findings for selected metropolitan areas of various sizes in different regions. Among the largest metropolitan areas shown, the most segregated one was Detroit, the area that previously had the

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[11] In New England, metropolitan areas are defined as aggregations of towns and cities rather than counties, so non-metropolitan counties in New England were defined as the remaining portions of counties not part of metropolitan areas.

[12] Even less appealing is the nation, which was the implicit unit of comparison used by Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1982).

dubious distinction of having the most segregated public schools in the country (Clotfelter 1999). As was typical of the most segregated metropolitan areas described in that study, the bulk of segregation in Detroit can be attributed to racial disparities between school districts, of which there were 110. Such inter-district disparities accounted for 0.594 of the total 0.672 segregation index.[13] As can be seen by examining the third and fourth components of overall segregation, private schools contributed to segregation in all these cases, but their importance tended to be rather modest. Among the eight large metropolitan areas shown in the table, private schools contributed the most to segregation in Baltimore (0.049 + 0.025), which also had the highest rate of private school enrollment among whites.

Among the smaller metropolitan areas shown in Table 4, overall segregation differed more widely, with Jackson, Mississippi having the highest index of the group. Not surprisingly, these metropolitan areas had fewer districts on average, meaning that the contribution of disparities among districts was smaller than for the larger metropolitan areas. The district with the largest inter-district component was Flint, Michigan, which also had the largest number of districts. The contribution of private schools to overall segregation differed widely in this group, ranging from a scant 0.003 in Fayetteville, Arkansas to 0.245 in nearby Jackson, Mississippi.

To obtain an overall assessment of segregation patterns and particularly the contribution

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[13] Calculated metropolitan segregation indices for 1994/95 for five of the large metropolitan areas shown in Table 4 appear in Clotfelter (1999, Table 3, p. 494). The indices in that study are quite similar to those shown in Table 4 of the present Table, but generally tend to be a little larger. For example, the within- and between-district components for Detroit in 1994/95 were 0.03 and 0.68, respectively. For Atlanta, the corresponding components were 0.15 and 0.36, respectively. These components are not strictly comparable. The calculations in the present study employ exposure rates that are weighted averages that include private schools and the percentage gap is based on the racial composition of all students, not just public students

of private schools, Table 5 summarizes school segregation for the nation by region and metropolitan status. Of all K-12 students in 1999/2000, 35.1 % were nonwhite. 13.9 % of whites attended private schools, compared to 6.4% of nonwhites.[14] Where segregation applies to racial disparities among all schools – both public and private – and where metropolitan areas or non-metropolitan counties are used as geographical units of comparison, the average gap-based segregation index was 0.301, of which 0.185 or 61% can be attributed to disparities among public school districts. Second in importance, accounting for 0.068, or about 23% of the total, were disparities between the schools within public school districts. Private school enrollment was relatively less important in contributing to racial segregation: taken together, the disparity in average racial composition of public and private schools and differences among private schools accounted for about 17% of total segregation.

Comparisons by region in Table 5 present an interesting contrast to previous regional comparisons. Although the South shows lower average segregation when comparing the largest metropolitan areas, its average segregation was higher than that of smaller Border metropolitan areas and equal to those in the rest of the U.S., and its segregation in non-metropolitan areas was higher than that in the rest of the U.S. It is worth emphasizing that the segregation indices calculated in the present paper differ in two significant respects from conventional calculations based on segregation within districts: they include private schools, and they examine disparities within metropolitan areas or non-metropolitan counties rather than just within school districts.

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[14] The 13.9% rate for whites is much higher than the 11.7% rate obtained by Reardon and Yun (2002, Table 2, p. 16), using comparable data for 1997/98. At least part of that difference appears to be due to their understatement of private enrollment for that year. Part may be due to the understatement of public enrollment in the current paper, owing perhaps to the exclusion of special state-run public schools.

How important were private schools in contributing to segregation in the South? In non-metropolitan areas, they were very important indeed, accounting for 0.057, or 42%, of total segregation. In the South's metropolitan areas private schools were a factor more in line with private schools in the rest of the nation.

IV. Private Schools Outside Metropolitan Areas and "Tipping"

As the previous discussion makes clear, private schools tend to exacerbate racial segregation in schools, but in most communities they contribute less to segregation than aspects of the public schools do. However, the history of desegregation in the U.S. does offer some examples of communities for which the private schools have represented the major device for whites to avoid some of the effects of school desegregation. As illustrated by the case of Mississippi in the period 1968-1972, some districts with very high proportions of black students saw a huge exodus of white students to private schools. An obvious question to pose today is whether such patterns have been sustained over time. For the case of Mississippi, the aggregate data in Table 2 suggest that much of the increase in private enrollments was sustained, in that those enrollments did decline after their peak, but not to pre-desegregation levels. However, I know of no follow-up research to explore whether the patterns observed in the enrollments of the early 1970s have continued, in particular the tendency for white departures from the public schools to "tip" at some point. Nor has there been research to see whether such patterns are evident outside of Mississippi.

As a way of assessing current patterns of private enrollment in non-metropolitan areas, Table 6 shows the percentage of whites who were enrolled in private schools, by the proportion

of nonwhites in the county. These rates are tabulated separately for Border, South, and the remaining regions. For the South, but only for the South, the private enrollment share clearly tended to rise with the percentage nonwhite in the county over most of the range of racial compositions. Furthermore, there was a perceptible jump in the private share at 60%, followed by large increases at 65 and 80%, so that the share of whites attending private school in counties over 80% nonwhite was at least triple the rate for counties below 60%. Outside the South, however, the private enrollment share among whites showed little relationship to the county racial composition. As the columns under N indicate, there are relatively few non-metropolitan counties outside the South that are predominantly nonwhite. For the few that do have high nonwhite percentages, African-Americans are not the major nonwhite racial group.

Private schools served most clearly as a vehicle for "white flight" in largely black non-metropolitan counties in the South. In 1999/2000, private schools enrolled over half of all white students in 41 non-metropolitan counties, 29 of which are in Mississippi, Alabama, or Georgia. (Appendix Table A1 lists these counties.) The vast majority of these counties had very high percentages of nonwhite students. Many of them lie in the South's black belt counties that once used slave labor to cultivate cotton, and were among the counties with the largest disparities in funding between schools for whites and blacks in the days of de jure segregation (Bond 1934). They were also the counties where social divisions in the Jim Crow era were most rigid and severely enforced. Sunflower County, Mississippi, the location of Dollard's classic *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937), in 1999/2000 continued to operate largely separate schools for whites and blacks, wherein 73% of all whites attended private schools. A similar story applies to nearby Washington County, where 58% of the whites were in private schools in 1999/2000.

Blackmon (1992) describes that county's major town, Leland, as largely segregated twenty years after the advent of school desegregation. In these Deep South counties with high proportions of blacks, where relations between the races historically were marked by separation and inequality, private schools became – and continue to be – the primary means of maintaining segregation in K-12 schooling.

Combined with the general stability or growth of private enrollments in the South after 1970, these findings suggest that private schools were playing much the same role in non-metropolitan counties of the South in 1999/2000 as they were shortly after desegregation. In the relatively few predominantly black counties, whites seeking to avoid being in the minority in schools opted for private schools, thus further exacerbating the racial disparity between public and private schools. In those counties, this tipping phenomenon obviously made significant racial integration in the schools impossible.

V. Recent Trends in Private School Enrollment and Segregation

It was possible to track recent trends in private school enrollment and segregation by using comparable data on public and private schools in 1995/96 and using them to make comparisons to 1999/2000. Table 7 presents calculations of both using the previous categories defined by regions and metropolitan status. The table suggests that the rate of private enrollment among whites increased across the board, rising from 12.9 to 13.9% for the nation. These increases were especially large in the South and Border.[15] Segregation also increased, except in

[15] A note of caution may be indicated by the presence of some very large values in the weighting variable applied to enrollments in the 1999/2000 survey. An extreme example is Simpson County, Kentucky, where the weighted total private enrollment for the county exceeds

the largest metropolitan areas in the Border region. For the nation, the average index rose from 0.288 to 0.301.

Table 8 lists the metropolitan areas in the South with the largest increases and decreases in segregation over the four-year period. Among large metropolitan areas, the list is headed by Charlotte, whose central city district, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, has been a bellwether Southern district since the *Swann* decision of 1971. Segregation there increased by almost 23%, of which about a third was due to the effects of an increase in private enrollments. The biggest decline in segregation occurred in Atlanta, the result of increased racial balance within school districts. In none of these large metropolitan areas did segregation change as much as it did among the smaller metropolitan areas. In four of these cases – Albany, Georgia, Jackson, Mississippi, Brownsville, Texas and Asheville, N.C. – private schools were a major factor in the change.

VI. Conclusion

The empirical analysis presented in this paper shows clearly that private schools have a role in the racial segregation of students in K-12 schools, and this finding has special force in parts of the South. The paper examines the role of private school enrollment in contributing to segregation in elementary and secondary schools, with special attention to that region. To do so, it extends the measurement of school segregation so as to include private schools as well as public schools. It employs a gap-based measure of segregation that allows for a decomposition into a part attributable to racial disparities within school districts, a part due to disparities

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the unweighted total by a factor of 15, and so that county was omitted from the appendix Table A1. In any case, it is well to recall that the private enrollment figures for both years are derived using weights provided in the data set.

between districts, and two additional parts associated with disparities associated with private schools. Using data on public and private enrollments in 1999/2000, the paper shows that most of the segregation in metropolitan areas and non-metropolitan counties is due to racial disparities between public school districts. By contrast, private schools accounted for only about 17% of such segregation for the nation. Nationwide, the percentage of whites enrolled in private schools increased between 1995/96 and 1999/2000, as did school segregation.

In the South, private schools have played a particularly important role. In the three decades following the advent of serious school desegregation in the late 1960s, private school enrollment in the South grew in importance while it generally declined elsewhere. Three factors would appear to explain this divergent Southern trend in private school enrollment. The first is clearly school desegregation itself. Both the timing and location of the growth in private schools strongly suggest that the surge in demand was motivated by a desire among whites to avoid public schools with sizable proportions of black students. But the aspect of the South that transformed this desire into a demand for private schools was the geographically large size of public school districts throughout most of the region. Unlike the metropolitan areas of the North and Midwest, those in the South have far fewer districts. It may even be the case that the existence of de jure segregation in public schools encouraged Southern states to use counties, rather than towns and cities, as the basic organizing unit for public school administration, since whites needed no separate districts to achieve racially separate schools. For whatever reason, the large size of the districts in the South meant that, when desegregation came, whites seeking to avoid its effects typically did not have the option so widely available in the North and West, to move to a nearby predominantly-white enclave. Thus private schools became the readiest

avenue for exit. And in most districts outside metropolitan areas, private schools were the only alternative. The clearest indication of the link between desegregation and private enrollment in these non-metropolitan areas is the finding that the rate at which whites enrolled in private schools tended to rise with the nonwhite percentage in the county, increasing markedly in counties with percentages of nonwhite students over 60%.[16]

The second factor contributing to the South's divergent trend in private enrollment is the region's low proportion of Catholics. For reasons wholly unrelated to school desegregation, Catholic parochial school enrollment in the country has been declining since about 1960 (U.S. Department of Education 2001, Table 63, p. 72), so that in regions of the country where those schools were the predominant form of private schools, private enrollments faced a declining trend to start with, a trend that affected the South to a much lesser extent. A third reason for the South's increase in private enrollment is its economic integration into the national economy, bringing with it rising personal income and an influx of migrants from other regions. These changes in turn led to an increase in demand for schooling and, specifically, private schooling. The South, in short, became more like the rest of the country. Middle class whites, like their counterparts in other regions, demanded good schools and they often associated that demand

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[16] Reardon and Yun (2002, pp. 7-8) offer evidence they say undermines the notion that private enrollments are motivated by the desire to avoid desegregated public schools: the historically higher private enrollment rates in regions with lower rates of interracial contact in public schools (the Northeast and Midwest) and the stability of private enrollment during the 1970s, the period of the most intense desegregation activity. In fact, these observations simply confirm that avoidance of desegregation is not the exclusive or primary motivation for private enrollment. The dominance of Catholic parochial schools in some regions, and their decline everywhere largely explain these observations. Abundant evidence supports the importance of avoidance motives in private enrollment, including the explanatory power of the percentage black in Reardon and Yun's regressions explaining white private enrollment rates (Table D1).

with schools having comparatively small shares of nonwhites.

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Appendix

Actual and Hypothetical Exposure Rates for a Metropolitan Area

Exposure rate for the metropolitan area

Actual. Weighted average of exposure rates of public and private schools.

$$E = (E_1 W_1 + E_2 W_2) / (W_1 + W_2)$$

Hypothetical cases

I: Racially balanced public school districts. Every public school in each district has the same racial composition. Thus the exposure rate for public schools is raised to E_1^*, which is a weighted average of district racial compositions.

$$E^* = (E_1^* W_1 + E_2 W_2) / (W_1 + W_2)$$

II. Metropolitan-wide racial balance in public schools. Every public school throughout the metropolitan area has the same racial composition. Thus the exposure rate for public schools

is raised to $\%N_1$.

$$E^{**} = (\%N_1 W_1 + E_2 W_2) / (W_1 + W_2)$$

III. Racial balance in private schools; racial balance in public schools; existing racial disparity in overall racial composition between public and private schools. Although public and private schools may have different overall racial compositions, all private schools have the same racial composition, and all public schools have the same racial composition. Thus the exposure rate for private schools is raised to $\%N_2$.

$$E^{***} = (\%N_1 W_1 + \%N_2 W_2) / (W_1 + W_2)$$

IV. Racial balance with a common racial composition in all schools, public and private. Every school throughout the metropolitan area has the same racial composition. Thus the exposure rate for all schools is raised to %N.

Components of school segregation

Portion due to differences within districts	$(E^{*} - E)/ \%N$
Portion due to differences between districts	$(E^{**} - E^{*})/ \%N$
Portion due to segregation among private schools	$(E^{***} - E^{**})/ \%N$
Portion due public-private racial disparity	$(\%N - E^{***})/ \%N$
Total segregation	$(\%N - E)/ \%N$

Definitions

W_1, W_2 = white students in public, private schools, respectively

E_1, E_2 = *exposure rate of whites to nonwhites in public and private schools,* respectively. This is a weighted average of individual school racial compositions, where the weights are the number of white students in each school. Where W_i and N_i are the number of whites and nonwhites, respectively, in school i in either sector and W and N are their totals for the district, either exposure rate is calculated as:

$$E = (1/W) \sum W_i [N_i/(W_i + N_i)] ,$$

$\%N_1$, $\%N_2$ = proportion nonwhite enrollment in public, private schools, respectively

Table 1. Percentage in Private School, Grades 1-12, by Region, 1960 to 2000

	1960	*1970*	*1980*	*1990*	*1999*
Border	11.9	9.6	9.8	9.9	13.1
South	5.0	5.2	7.8	7.5	8.2
Northeast	21.8	17.9	14.6	14.1	13.6
Midwest	17.9	13.3	11.6	11.1	11.8
West	9.1	7.1	8.2	7.8	8.0
U.S.	13.6	11.0	10.4	9.8	10.3

Source: 1999-U.S. Department of Education (2001, Tables 37 and 63).
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Table 2. Public and Private K-12 Enrollment in Mississippi, Fall of Selected Years

	Private	Public	Total	Percent private
1967	21,817	599,891	621,708	3.5
1972	62,366	526,366	588,732	10.6
1980	50,116	471,615	521,731	9.6
1997	54,529	504,792	559,321	9.7

Note: For 1980, public enrollment based on fall 1981 enrollment.
Sources: Private: Clotfelter (1976, Table 1, p. 30); *Digest of Education Statistics 1989* (1989, Table 37, p. 48), *2000* (2001, Table 64, p. 73).
Public: *Digest of Education Statistics 1970* (1970, Table 37, p. 48); *1973* (1974, Table 29, p. 30); *1989* (1989, Table 54, p. 67); *2000* (2001, Table 39, p. 50-51).

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Table 3. Percentage of K-12 Students in Private School, by Region, Metropolitan Status and Percentage of Whites in Private School by Region, 1999/2000

		Percentage of students in Private Schools				
Region	School enrollment (000s)	Large metro areas	Small metro areas	Non-metro counties	All	Percentage of whites in private schools
Border	4,338	14.5	11.5	4.8	10.9	13.3
South	14,759	10.3	8.9	4.5	8.4	13.1
Northeast	9,146	17.4	11.7	7.7	13.9	18.4
Midwest	10,410	14.8	11.6	6.7	11.5	13.2
West	11,607	9.8	6.7	3.9	8.2	12.2
U.S.	50,261	12.6	9.9	5.4	10.2	13.9

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1999/2000; NCES, Private School Universe, 1999/2000; author's calculations

Note: Large metropolitan areas are defined as those with K-12 enrollments of 200,000 or more in 1999/2000.

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Table 4. Illustrative Calculations for 16 Metropolitan Areas, 1999/2000

				% in private schools		Segregation				
	Number of districts	Enrollment	Percent nonwhite	White	Nonwhite	Within districts	Between districts	Among private schools	Between public and private schools	Total
Large metro areas										
Border										
Washington, DC	17	782,206	52.4	17.1	8.6	.089	.237	.046	.015	.387
Baltimore	7	447,386	38.0	20.2	8.4	.172	.282	.049	.025	.527
South										
Atlanta	23	717,234	44.8	12.3	4.8	.152	.285	.030	.017	.483
Dallas	69	637,313	49.6	11.0	3.8	.052	.300	.017	.019	.388
Tampa-St. Petersburg	4	367,637	31.0	14.6	6.7	.108	.075	.019	.013	.215
Charlotte	11	206,849	33.5	14.0	3.6	.131	.084	.018	.026	.258
Other										
Detroit	110	812,484	30.1	12.4	8.7	.018	.594	.057	.003	.672

Denver	19	362,102	34.1	9.8	5.4	.075	.255	.021	.006	.357
Small metro areas										
Border										
Hagerstown, MD	1	21,251	9.4	11.2	9.3	.076	.000	.010	.000	.087
Louisville, KY	12	182,831	21.3	24.1	3.8	.048	.107	.003	.043	.202
South										
Chattanooga	8	80,785	20.1	15.2	10.5	.387	.106	.050	.003	.547
Jackson, MS	12	96,555	50.8	41.5	5.1	.065	.305	.057	.188	.615
El Paso, TX	9	152,834	87.9	10.2	4.6	.094	.021	.021	.007	.142
Fayetteville, AR	16	52,212	14.5	4.7	2.5	.037	.034	.002	.001	.074
Other										
Flint, MI	29	98,666	26.6	8.3	4.5	.068	.494	.016	.004	.582
Springfield, MA	23	94,148	31.0	13.9	4.4	.028	.407	.013	.020	.467

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1999/2000; NCES, Private School Universe, 1999/2000; author's calculations

Note: Large metropolitan areas are defined as those with K-12 enrollments of 200,000 or more in 1999/2000.
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Table 5. Enrollment, Racial Composition, Private Enrollment, and Segregation, by Region and Metropolitan Status, 1999/2000

			% in private schools		Segregation				
	Enrollment (000s)	Percent nonwhite	Whites	Nonwhites	Within districts	Between districts	Among private schools	Between public and private schools	Total
Border									
Large metro	2,036	38.0	18.3	8.0	.087	.315	.041	.020	.462
Small metro	1,059	21.7	13.6	5.9	.054	.091	.011	.017	.173
Non-metro	1,244	9.3	4.9	5.7	.022	.021	.004	.009	.056
South									
Large metro	5,500	50.1	15.5	5.5	.113	.192	.031	.026	.363
Small metro	5,367	40.4	13.0	4.1	.120	.125	.017	.028	.289
Non-metro	3,892	30.0	9.6	2.0	.051	.029	.004	.053	.136
Rest of U.S.									
Large metro	15,210	46.7	19.0	8.6	.070	.275	.056	.026	.426
Small metro	10,232	25.7	11.9	6.4	.052	.210	.028	.008	.288
Non-metro	5,721	11.9	6.3	6.4	.018	.043	.009	.005	.074
U.S.	50,261	35.1	13.9	6.4	.068	.185	.029	.022	.301

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1999/2000; NCES, Private School Universe, 1999/2000;

author's calculations

Note: Large metropolitan areas are defined as those with K-12 enrollments of 200,000 or more in 1999/2000. P18 8/20/02

Table 6. Non-metropolitan Private School Enrollment and County Racial Composition, Border, South and Other Regions, Grades K-12, 1999/2000

	Number of counties and percentage of whites enrolled in private schools					
	Border		South		Rest of U.S.	
Percent nonwhite in county	N	%	N	%	N	%
0 to under 5	231	2.2	381	0.6	822	3.9
5 to under 10	31	7.5	36	4.7	161	7.2
10 to under 15	17	7.8	25	3.6	70	6.4
15 to under 20	7	5.7	27	4.4	44	6.4
20 to under 25	7	10.7	30	6.8	21	5.1
25 to under 30	5	7.6	28	5.6	18	6.2
30 to under 35	5	5.9	18	9.8	16	4.7
35 to under 40	4	6.3	41	7.7	8	5.9
40 to under 45	3	9.9	43	8.9	8	10.7
45 to under 50	1	3.3	37	12.5	10	6.8
50 to under 55	2	1.9	30	13.0	9	4.1
55 to under 60	0	--	36	18.4	10	4.6
60 to under 65	1	2.3	21	28.7	7	4.0
65 to under 70	0	--	17	38.7	2	5.6
70 to under 75	0	--	13	35.9	1	0.0

75 to under 80	0	--	14	35.5	2	1.2
80 to under 85	0	--	12	60.6	3	7.5
85 to under 90	0	--	8	71.2	3	10.4
90 to under 95	0	--	5	76.5	3	13.9
95 to 100	0	--	5	5.6	2	32.5

Table 7. Recent Trends in Private School Enrollment and Segregation, 1995/96 - 1999/2000

	% Whites in private schools		Overall segregation	
	1995/1996	1999/2000	1995/1996	1999/2000
Border				
Large metro	16.9	18.3	.466	.462
Small metro	11.2	13.6	.161	.173
Non-metro	3.9	4.9	.056	.056
South				
Large metro	13.5	15.5	.367	.363
Small metro	11.2	13.0	.277	.289
Non-metro	9.0	9.6	.128	.136
Rest of U.S.				
Large metro	18.4	19.0	.419	.426
Small metro	11.8	11.9	.271	.288
Non-metro	6.0	6.3	.066	.074
U.S.	12.9	13.9	.288	.301

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1995/96 and1999/2000; NCES, Private School Universe, 1995/96 and 1999/2000; author's calculations

Note: Large metropolitan areas are defined as those with K-12 enrollments of 200,000 or more in 1999/2000. Metropolitan areas

defined as of 1990. P19 8/21/02

Table 8. Metropolitan Areas in South with Largest Increases and Decreases in Segregation, 1995/96 - 1999/2000

	% whites in private schools			Change in segregation			
	1995/ 1996	1999/ 2000	Overall segregation 1999/2000	Between districts	Within districts	Private schools	Total
Large metro areas							
Increases							
Charlotte, NC	10.6	12.3	.258	.021	.013	.016	.048
Nashville, TN	13.8	15.7	.330	.002	.039	.003	.045
Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL	12.9	14.6	.215	.012	.010	.007	.030
Orlando, FL	13.9	15.8	.231	.003	.011	.013	.027
Norfolk, VA	9.1	11.7	.247	.013	-.004	.011	.019
Decreases							
Atlanta, GA	9.1	12.3	.483	.007	-.053	.009	-.039
Fort Lauderdale, FL	15.6	20.0	.267	-.035	.000	.013	-.022
San Antonio, TX	11.1	11.3	.327	.004	-.015	.003	-.009
Dallas, TX	10.0	11.0	.388	-.005	-.005	.005	-.005

Miami, FL	23.3	26.9	.242	-.021	.000	.019	-.002
Small metro areas							
Increases							
Albany, GA	19.8	45.0	.575	-.022	.030	.160	.167
Pine Bluff, AR	5.0	6.8	.445	-.003	.087	.006	.090
Greensboro, NC	8.8	10.3	.352	.049	.018	.007	.074
Jackson, MS	23.7	41.5	.615	-.045	.002	.111	.069
Alexandria, LA	10.9	15.0	.345	.048	.007	.014	.068
Decreases							
Florence, SC	18.8	21.8	.220	-.070	-.003	.011	-.062
Asheville, NC	6.6	8.4	.177	.013	-.014	-.046	-.046
Wichita Falls, TX	3.8	4.8	.156	-.049	.003	.006	-.039
Brownsville, TX	29.2	19.8	.160	.002	.010	-.049	-.038
Chattanooga, TN	14.1	15.2	.547	.229	-.295	.031	-.034

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1995/96 and1999/2000; NCES, Private School Universe, 1995/96 and 1999/2000; author's calculations

Note: Large metropolitan areas are defined as those with K-12 enrollments of 200,000 or more in 1999/2000. Metropolitan areas defined as of 1990.

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Appendix Table A1. Non-metropolitan Counties with over Half of White Students in Private Schools, 1999/2000

State	County	Districts	Percentage nonwhite in county	Percentage white in private schools	Segregation				
					Within district	Between districts	Among private schools	Between public and private schools	Total
MS	Noxubee	1	88.2	100.0	.000	.000	.000	.977	.977
AL	Sumter	1	89.6	99.4	.000	.000	.000	.993	.993
MS	Wilkinson	1	65.2	98.5	.000	.000	.000	.970	.970
MS	Claiborne	1	90.4	98.1	.000	.000	.000	.943	.944
AL	Wilcox	1	82.1	97.3	.000	.000	.042	.918	.960
AL	Greene	1	93.3	97.1	.000	.000	.000	.915	.915
AL	Bullock	1	92.5	95.0	.001	.000	.000	.914	.915
AL	Loundes	1	89.0	94.6	.000	.000	.000	.939	.940
AL	Perry	1	86.3	93.4	.001	.000	.003	.825	.829
MS	Holmes	2	81.7	90.1	.001	.018	.000	.854	.873

GA	Warren	1	69.2	86.9	.000	.000	.000	.814	.814
MS	Quitman	1	83.5	86.2	.001	.000	.000	.809	.810
MS	Kemper	1	78.1	85.2	.002	.000	.000	.817	.819
MS	Tunica	1	89.5	84.3	.000	.000	.000	.817	.818
SC	Lee	1	72.8	83.2	.006	.000	.000	.770	.776
GA	Terrell	1	82.3	82.1	.001	.000	.000	.791	.791
MS	Humphreys	1	86.3	81.5	.001	.000	.000	.778	.779
GA	Hancock	1	92.6	79.0	.001	.000	.000	.777	.777
MS	Sunflower	3	81.8	72.9	.069	.008	.000	.671	.748
AR	Lee	1	80.6	67.2	.003	.000	.000	.617	.620
MS	Adams	1	63.8	65.0	.002	.000	.047	.435	.485
MS	Amite	1	65.9	64.1	.006	.000	.000	.538	.544

MS	Leflore	2	82.6	62.0	.155	.014	.121	.438	.728
GA	Randolph	1	74.0	61.3	.001	.000	.000	.530	.532
SD	Shannon	1	99.0	60.0	.006	.000	.002	.003	.011
GA	Dooly	1	67.4	59.4	.012	.000	.083	.389	.485
TN	Fayette	2	55.2	58.5	.090	.000	.000	.421	.511
MS	Washington	4	75.4	58.2	.106	.110	.004	.456	.677
MS	Yazoo	2	68.5	58.0	.078	.109	.000	.481	.668
MS	Clay	2	64.0	57.8	.002	.004	.000	.439	.445
LA	East Carroll	1	82.9	57.2	.237	.000	.000	.475	.712
VA	Fredericksburg city	1	33.3	56.9	.013	.000	.007	.182	.203
LA	Plaquemines	1	47.7	56.2	.264	.000	.002	.324	.591
LA	Madison	1	76.4	55.9	.103	.000	.000	.479	.583

MS	Coahoma	3	79.3	55.8	.151	.025	.004	.461	.640
MS	Carroll	1	56.3	54.0	.027	.000	.000	.395	.423
NE	Antelope	5	1.5	53.5	.003	.004	.000	.002	.009
LA	East Feliciana	1	64.1	53.3	.103	.000	.000	.414	.517
AL	Choctaw	1	55.5	51.8	.094	.000	.000	.369	.463
SC	Fairfield	1	76.4	51.2	.020	.000	.000	.443	.463
SC	Calhoun	1	64.3	50.6	.122	.000	.000	.388	.510

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data, 1999/2000; NCES, Private School Universe, 1999/2000; author's calculations

Note: Alaska boroughs not included along with Simpson County, Nebraska.

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